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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

WITH THE A. E. F.

ANTE PROELIUM

In the clairvoyance of a midnight waking
I took an inventory of Myself:
A little knowledge on a dusty shelf,
A few good deeds (Fragile—Beware of Breaking),
A light heart, fissured by no hours of aching,
Scraps of old songs, fragments of childish fears,
And blowing memories of unlit years,
And litter of achievements—in the making.

“And this,” I said, “is all I have to give
In the extremity of all mankind!
I give it gladly; for I do not find
It hard that this agglomerate should not live;
The only thing,” I said, “about being dead,
The hard part is, I have three friends,” I said.

BEFORE MY FIRE IN A FRENCH VILLAGE

Words and faces and jests and dreams all come to me again
When I give my memory leave to play; but what I see most
plain
Is the little towns that loll in the sun and shiver and crouch
in the rain.

Morris Bishop

The towns of my youth come crowding and tumbling, they
will not wait for my thought:
Varna, Slaterville, Danby, Ransome, Mesnil Butte, La
Motte—
The towns where I went searching and troubled, not know-
ing what I sought.

The towns that I saw with a young man's eyes: Grafton,
Half-moon Bay,
Canutillo, Whitewater, Bolton, Bolinas, Monterey.
The sun was bright upon those towns the day I went away.

Now I have found a kind of peace, and long hours to beguile
With thinking of the roads I've trod for many a dusty mile,
And the little wayside towns where I have rested for a
while.

LE PÈRE SEGRET

He was a wise old man, the color of earth;
From long upturning the earth his back was bent.
He told me how the wine was bad in the spring,
How the spring turned it moody and turbulent.

He tapped his earthy finger on the glass;
"The spring," he said, "the spring runs into the soil,
And warms the vine, clipped to the very blood,
To bring forth buds with agony and toil.